

July 22, 2008

OBEY BACKS REGULATORY RELIEF FOR RECREATIONAL BOATERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) supported the passage today of the Clean Boating Act to protect recreational boaters from tough new regulations on discharges that could expose boat operators to fines of up to \$32,500 per day.

Since passage of the Clean Water Act in 1973, recreational vessels and smaller commercial boats have been exempt from regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, a California court ruling in 2006 required that the EPA include all waterborne craft under the regulations by September 30, 2008. That means all boat owners would be required to get a permit to operate and be subject to severe restrictions on incidental discharges such as rainwater runoff, engine cooling water discharge, and bilgewater. The Clean Boating Act overturns the court and maintains the longstanding exemption for recreational vessels from pollution permitting requirements for discharges that are incidental to the normal operation of the boat.

"We should be increasing our efforts to protect our waterways," said Obey, "but the Clean Water Act was intended to apply to ballast and other discharges from large commercial vessels, not to the incidental runoff from pontoon boats. If the California court ruling is allowed to stand then millions of recreational boaters will find that they can't even clean their boats without facing a huge fine. That makes no sense."

Noting that "invasive species and pollution are a growing threat to the Great Lakes and other waterways," Obey said he has been helping get federal support for the Great Ships Initiative, a state-of-the-art facility on the shore of Lake Superior which is testing ballast water treatment technology and helping to find a solution to the problem of invasive species, without ruining the shipping industry or placing the jobs of thousands of maritime and shore-based workers at risk. "We must maintain those efforts and Congress is trying to enact ballast water standards that will toughen regulation of the oceangoing vessels that bring the invasive species into the Great Lakes. However, this is not about ballast water or invasive species. It's about adopting a common sense policy that will ensure that more than 13 million recreational boaters across the country and 620,000 boaters in Wisconsin can continue to enjoy their

boats."

According to the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the East North Central region, including the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin has more recreational boaters than anywhere else in the nation, with Michigan in the number one spot and Wisconsin number 6 and growing rapidly.

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